



Acts: Your Best Response in Your Worst Moment

Date: Sunday 22nd November

Speaker: Andrew McNeil

Key Verses: Acts 16

Talk Summary:

- Have you ever had a moment when you've tried to follow God, but it didn't pan out as you expected. That was the story for Paul and Silas in Acts 16. They had been led by God to Philippi. It starts well with Lydia coming to faith but the story turns as the slave girl gets delivered. 16ff. Paul and Silas are flogged and beaten then imprisoned. v22
- What is under threat in your worst moment? Your worst moment is trying to destroy your highest purpose. It's trying to undermine your confidence in God and his purpose for you. These worst moments represent a fork in the road and the invitation is to run to God, not from him. Even with your pain and questions. It's OK to be real in our trials and the invitation is to really trust God. Paul and Silas best response was to pray and worship and it strengthened them in a time they were bruised crushed and weak.
- Life giving spiritual habits are for our good. "They are about us receiving the love of God, resting in the love of God and responding to the love of God. They Help us become awake to how God is with us". Sharon Garlough Brown.
- We're told that the other prisoners were listening. There is always an audience on the edge of your trial. Prisoners, the enemy, kids or a colleague. Hebrews says we have a heavenly audience - "Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us run the race with perseverance." Hebrews 12:1-3. Perseverance is courage in slow motion. Whatever we face others have walked this path and God has been faithful.
- Just because God is for you doesn't mean that nothing will come against you. We don't thank God for the trial but in the midst of the trial. I'm not saying deny the reality of your situation but I am saying deny it the right to set the agenda or dictate your response. Life can be bad but God is still good.

- It's easy to rejoice after a breakthrough or in a moment a blessing. They were worshiping before their deliverance. That's called a "sacrifice of praise". To praise helps us find strength in the character of God in the midst of our trials. Philippians 4:4/ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Psalm 22:3 "The Lord inhabits the praises of his people" so worship welcomes His strengthening presence.
- They were in pitch black so they sang things they had memorised. Some things I choose to forget, some things I choose to remember and recall. Forget your forgiven failures. Stop reliving your worst moments. Jeremiah best response in his worst moment was to remember (call to mind) God's character. Lamentations 3:20-24. It gave him hope in a time of trial.
- Jesus speaks of praise as a source of strength. In Matthew 21 Jesus quotes Psalm 8 and he changes strength for praise. Jesus the word, is either misquoting the word or he is giving insight and revelation. Praise is one of the ways God has designed for strength to come into your life as it resets your perspective.
- Because of their best response in the worst of moments God's purpose played out. v 27ff. After the earthquake, Paul wasn't trying to get out, he was trying to get the Good news in. He was less interested in an open prison door. He was more excited about an open door for the gospel.
- Fast forward 10 years. Paul is writing to this Church and says...I thank my God every time I remember you. Philippians 1:3. He doesn't mention the prison. Paul's is saying I remember the outcome not the opposition. God redeemed the pain and fulfilled his purpose.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? *(Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)*

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- We all have moments of pain, setback and loss: our worst moments. They are particularly challenging when we've been trying our best to follow God's leading and live his way. What are some of our worst responses and our best responses? How have you seen God repurpose your pain in the past? How does that give you hope for a present trial or future uncertainties?
- Consider the following headings to help the reflection.

Relationship and friends.

Best: *eg Be real and honest. Move towards.*

Worst: *eg Isolate or withdraw. Move away.*

My thinking.

Best:

Worst:

My habits and choices.

Best:

Worst:

My faith and connection with God.

Best:

Worst:

- Gratitude. "Research shows a huge benefit from cultivating gratitude" -Roger Bretherton, Clinical psychologist specialising in Character Strengths and Virtues. What routines do you have for cultivating gratitude and thanksgiving. Daily, weekly, annually.
- The earlier story in Acts 16:13 shows that the very act of speaking of Jesus was the context for Lydia's heart to be opened. Doors opening seems to be a theme of the whole of chapter 16. Let's pray for open doors for the good news in this time of real uncertainty.

Taking it further.

Life giving spiritual habits are for our good. "They are about us receiving the love of God, resting in the love of God and responding to the love of God. They help us become awake to how God is with us."- Sharon Garlough Brown. Is the Lord highlighting a spiritual habit to you?

Why don't you explore this excellent free training module on "[spending time with Jesus](#)". It's been created by the team at Vineyard Training. It's free with 5 videos and handouts.

If you liked Pete Greig's illustration on prayer, see it in full [here](#).

Witness

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus.

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?
 - Who in your world would appreciate an invitation to Alpha/Christmas? Begin praying for them.

Note to Small Group Leaders: Please note that if you'd like to review the sermon, or have a hard time following the video, you can use subtitles on YouTube. On the YouTube video, click the "closed captioning" button (bottom left of YouTube video screen, first button). Google "how to show subtitles on YouTube videos" if you need help with this.